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SUBJECT: HOUSE OF COUNCILORS PRESIDENT PUSHES PARLIAMENTARY
EXCHANGES

¶1. (U) Japanese House of Councilors President Chikage Ogi, accompanied by House of Councilors International Affairs Department Director General Yoshiyuki Sadaoka and Secretarial Division Director Satoshi Fujukawa, called on Ambassador October 11 to press for the revitalization of U.S.-Japanese parliamentary exchanges. Ogi lamented the fact that earlier exchange initiatives between the U.S. Congress and the Japanese Diet have languished as members who had been active from both countries have either retired or have been voted out of office.

¶2. (U) Ogi explained that her office has been in touch with both Senator Daniel Inoyue (D-HI) and Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) and is particularly interested in getting a program of upper house exchanges established before Senator Inoyue retires at the end of his term. She recognizes that House Speaker Dennis Hastert and his counterpart, Yohei Kono, have also initiated conversations about similar exchanges between the two House of Representatives. (NOTE: Lower House Speaker Kono has told Embassy Tokyo that he plans to lead a Diet delegation to Washington in November or December as a return trip for Speaker Hastert's visit to Japan.)

¶3. (U) Ambassador agreed that parliamentary exchanges would be useful and desirable. He suggested that perhaps Senator Inoyue would be interested in inviting a small number of his colleague to Hawaii prior to the reconvening of the Senate in January to meet with Ogi and others to plan a larger, more formal meeting later in the year, possibly during Japan's "Golden Week" in late April - early May. He also offered to call the majority and minority leaders of the Senate to express his support for Ogi's initiative. Ogi gladly accepted his offer.

¶4. (U) Ogi also informed the Ambassador that she will be visiting Beijing October 15-17 at the invitation of Wu Bangguo, Chairman of the People's Congress, to sign with him a parliamentary exchange agreement. She expressed disappointment that this agreement was taking place before one was reached with the Senate but emphasized the importance of developing good relations between Chinese and Japanese lawmakers.

SCHIEFFER